

Best of Last Week—Oldest-known sea reptile, new version of chatbot, how exercise benefits the body

March 20 2023, by Bob Yirka

Reconstruction of the earliest ichthyosaur and the 250-million-year-old ecosystem found on Spitsbergen. Credit: Esther van Hulsen

It was a good week for biology research as a team of Swedish and Norwegian paleontologists discovered the remains of [the oldest-known](#)

[sea reptile](#) from the age of the dinosaurs, an ichthyosaur, on an Arctic island. Also, the French Office for Biodiversity reported evidence that the [famous and elusive "cat-fox"](#) found on Corsica is a unique species of cat. And a team at Yale University discovered that one of the most [abundant beneficial species living in the human gut](#) displayed an increase in colonization potential when experiencing carbon limitation—a finding that could help medical researchers identify interventions to support a healthy gut.

In technology news, OpenAI issued a report claiming that [the newest version of its chatbot, GPT-4](#), is more accurate and has greatly improved problem-solving capabilities. They also claimed it exhibits human-level performance on academic and professional exams. And the AFP newswire published an opinion piece explaining [how AI could upend the world](#) even more than electricity or the internet did, suggesting that it will bring change that is an order of magnitude greater than anything the world has seen before. Also, a team of computer scientists from San Diego and New York explained [what happens when your phone is spying on you](#). You probably will not know it is happening, but you could suffer loss of privacy. And a team at Chalmers University of Technology designed [a propeller that allows for quiet, efficient electric aviation](#).

In other news, a team of researchers affiliated with several institutions in China found that [loss of the hypothalamic hormone menin](#) helps drive the aging process, and that some dietary supplements can reverse it, at least in mice. Also, a group of engineering students at Brown University showed that space research does not have to cost billions of dollars. They built [a satellite that runs on 48 AA batteries and uses a \\$20 microprocessor](#)—the total cost for the project was approximately \$10,000. And finally, a team of medical scientists at Northwest University uncovered a mechanism through which [exercise activates metabolic benefits in the body](#). They found a protein that is secreted by muscle contraction in mice, increasing plasma and serum.

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